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IN THE HOPE THAT FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS MIGHT DISCUSS THEM AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS, THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION HAS RELEASED THESE POLICY STATEMENTS FORMULATED TO GOVERN THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS. FOLLOWING A REFERENCE TO THE VALUE OF ACQUIRING NOT ONLY THE LANGUAGE SKILLS BUT ALSO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, THE DOCUMENT EMPHASIZES THE ADVANTAGES OF OFFERING AUDIOLINGUAL-ORIENTED LANGUAGE PROGRAMS WITH A LONGER SEQUENCE OF STUDY TO ASSURE GREATER MASTERY OF SKILLS AND CONTROL OF VOCABULARY. CITED AS BENEFITS IN ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE ARE THE RESULTING DIRECT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND EXPOSURE TO CULTURAL CONTENT. ALSO CONSIDERED IN THE STATEMENT ARE (1) THE USE OF AUDIOVISUAL AIDS, (2) FLES PROGRAMS, (3) THE INCLUSION IN COURSE OFFERINGS OF THE NEGLECTED LANGUAGES, (4) THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF THE CLASSICAL LANGUAGES IN THE CURRICULUM, AND (5) COLLEGE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS. THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM "PMLA," VOLUME 71, NUMBER 4, PART 2, SEPTEMBER 1956. (AB)

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# FL Program Policy

BROAD POLICIES governing the general conduct of the Foreign Language Program were laid down during the spring of 1952 by the Executive Council of the Modern Language Association, which at the same time appointed the MLA Executive Secretary to be Director of the Program, with discretionary powers to determine future policy. In December 1952 the Council appointed a Steering Committee to advise the Director.

Since the FL Program during its first two years was essentially an investigation, no further policies were enunciated in this period. In 1955 the Steering Committee was enlarged by the inclusion of representatives of the American Associations of Teachers of French, German, Italian, Slavic and East European Languages, and Spanish and Portuguese. At the first meeting of this enlarged Committee, on 12-13 February 1955, an important statement on "Qualifications for Secondary School Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages" was formulated. This statement was subsequently endorsed for publication by eighteen national and regional language organizations.

At its meeting on 28-29 April 1956 the Steering Committee addressed itself to the formulation of additional policy statements. These and two earlier statements are published on the following pages in the hope that they will be discussed by foreign language teachers at local, state, regional, and national meetings.

*The Steering Committee*

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# Values of Foreign Language Study

THE STUDY of a foreign language, like that of most other basic disciplines, is both a progressive *experience* and a progressive acquisition of a *skill*. At no point can the experience be considered complete, or the skill perfect. Many pupils study a foreign language only two years; longer time is of course needed to approach mastery. At *any* point, however, the progress made in a language, when properly taught, will have positive value and lay a foundation upon which further progress can be built. It is evident therefore that the expectancy of values to be derived from language study must be relative to the amount of time and effort devoted to it.

The study of a foreign language, skillfully taught under proper conditions, provides a *new experience*, progressively enlarging the pupil's horizon through the introduction to a new medium of communication and a new culture pattern, and progressively adding to his sense of pleasurable achievement. This experience involves:

1. The acquisition of a set of *skills*, which can become real mastery for professional use when practiced long enough. The international contacts and responsibilities of the United States make the possession of these skills by more and more Americans a matter of national urgency. These skills include:

a. The increasing ability to *understand* a foreign language when spoken, making possible greater profit and enjoyment in such steadily expanding activities as foreign travel, business abroad, foreign language movies and broadcasts.

b. The increasing ability to *speak* a foreign language in direct communication with people of another culture, either for business or for pleasure.

c. The ability to *read* the foreign language with progressively greater ease and enjoyment, making possible the broadening effects of direct acquaintance with the recorded thoughts of another people, or making possible study for vocational or professional (e.g., scientific or journalistic) purposes.

2. A new understanding of *language*, progressively revealing to the pupil the *structure* of language and giving him a new perspective on English, as well as an increased vocabulary and greater effectiveness in expression.

3. A gradually expanding and deepening knowledge of a foreign country—its geography, history, social organization, literature, and culture—and, as a consequence, a better perspective on American culture and a more enlightened Americanism through adjustment to the concept of differences between cultures.

Progress in any one of these experiences is relative to the emphasis given it in the instructional program and to the interests and aptitude of the learner. Language *skills*, like all practical skills, may never be perfected, and may be later forgotten, yet the enlarging and enriching results of the *cultural experience* endure throughout life.

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# On Foreign Language Teaching

THE ELEMENTARY language course at all levels, from elementary school through college, should concentrate at the beginning upon the learner's *hearing and speaking* the foreign tongue. Optimum results can be achieved by giving as much individual or controlled group oral practice as possible, and by setting the upper limit of class size at twenty. Throughout later stages, in lectures and in class discussions of literature and civilization, students should be provided with frequent opportunities for *maintaining* the hearing and speaking skills thus early acquired.

These recommendations are made with awareness of important differences among languages, among teaching situations and objectives, and among both learners and teachers. We recognize also that progress requires continuing experimentation and therefore an attendant variety of practices.

Learning to *read* a foreign language, the third phase of the hearing-speaking-reading-writing progression in the active and passive acquiring of language skills, is a necessary step in the total process. In teaching this skill, the goal should be reading with understanding and without conscious translation. Translation should be used only rarely as a device in teaching reading, but may come at a later stage as a meaningful literary or linguistic exercise provided that high standards are insisted on. Repeated systematic grammar review is wasteful in a reading class, but explanation of recurring, complex syntactical patterns is essential.

*Writing* is the fourth stage in the early acquirement of language skills; the student should write only what he is first capable of saying correctly. Topics should be assigned and carefully defined in such a way that the student may utilize to the maximum the vocabulary and speech patterns he has acquired. On an upper level of accomplishment, writing may include original composition, consideration of stylistics, analysis of literary texts, and translation of passages of literary English.

# FLs and International

AMERICAN EDUCATION is seriously concerned with the achievement of international understanding and cooperation. Foreign language learning has three contributions, two of which are unique, to make to the cultivation of better understanding among peoples of different linguistic background.

1. *Direct intercultural communication.* Only language learning permits direct intercultural communication through speech or writing. Some direct communication takes place through music, art, and other means, and interest and good will can be shown in many ways, but willingness to learn another language is perhaps the best token, in a multilingual world, that we *care* about international understanding. We must learn to use the other fellow's language if we would understand him because he will not find self-evident or satisfying the twist that English will inevitably give to partially shared ideals, aspirations, and concepts. If we insist on the exclusive use of English, we isolate ourselves from people of other cultures and miss altogether a wealth of important human contacts. At the same time we demonstrate that we expect others to describe things as *we* see them, not as they do.

It must be admitted, however, that, having studied the Orient in college and acquired fair proficiency in French, we may later find ourselves vacationing in Latin America or sent to Germany on business. Of what value is language learning to international understanding unless, by good luck, we have chosen the particular language we shall later need? A knowledge of one foreign language will normally make easier the learning of a second, but that is beside the point; we must remember, as well, a second unique contribution of language learning to international understanding.

2. *Experience of a foreign culture.* Through mimicry and speech-pattern assimilation, language learning brings the beginnings of direct comprehension, without translation, of foreign utterance and writing, and the beginnings of automatic vocal response in conversational situations. From this point on, the learner *experiences* the foreign culture

(i.e., the total pattern of behavior) by actually participating in an integral part of it. He has crossed an intellectual border, from a state of monolingualism to the realization that one can learn to make, without conscious effort, *foreign* responses to foreign stimuli. When the language student progresses to the point of being able to read foreign literature with understanding, his awareness of the new cultural medium is further enriched by the insights of creative writers, and his sympathies are involved by the skill of great art directly experienced.

Only language learning affords this intimate perception of a culture. It thus makes a crucial contribution toward the potential understanding of many cultures unlike our own, for a single experience with cultural relativity makes easier the transition to another mode of thought and, if need be, to many others. The antipathies that develop as psychological reactions to "foreign-ness" are much more likely to appear in monolingual persons than in those who have experienced direct comprehension and response in a foreign communication system.

3. *Information about a foreign culture.* The moment that language learning moves beyond the initial stage of listening and speaking it makes use of the printed word in the development of additional skills. The modern textbook "reader" in language classes usually has cultural content selected to give students an increasing knowledge of significant differences between the foreign peoples and Americans—in behavior, attitudes, and historical background. The language teacher, whose training (including foreign travel and acquaintance with the people and their literature) has given him personal experience in international understanding, is able to bring additional life and meaning to even the best of textbooks with his own knowledge and insight.

Foreign language teaching obviously has no monopoly on imparting information; indeed, information *about* a foreign culture derived from a language teacher or a language textbook may be somewhat more costly of time than information obtained, say, in a social studies class or through a translation. This third contribution of language learning to international understanding would be inefficient, therefore, were it not for the two other contributions which it *uniquely* makes.

# The Problem of

MOST public statements about the values of language learning, whether made by language teachers or by other persons, stress values that are achieved only with mastery of a foreign language or very considerable proficiency in speaking and reading it. No harm is done by such statements unless they imply or assume—as too often they do—that mastery or real proficiency can be achieved in two years of high school or one year of college instruction.

In the educational system of *no other nation on earth* is such an assumption made. It is not made because it is irresponsible. It is made in the United States only because language instruction here, unlike language instruction elsewhere, is frequently limited to two years of high school or one year of college instruction. The inevitable result has been disillusion for both pupils and public. With more and more people now advocating foreign language study in the national interest, both the public and educational administrators need to realize the amount of curricular time necessary for the acquisition of real proficiency in a second language. Here is the truth about the factor of time.

1. *Vocabulary.* Given adequately prepared teachers, classes of reasonable size, and proper aims, methods, and materials, in two high school years or one college year of instruction it is possible to inculcate an "active" (speaking-writing) vocabulary of between 500 and 1,000 words, and a "recognition" (hearing-reading) vocabulary of approximately 1,500 to 2,500. "Language," of course, is more than a body of isolated words that can thus be counted, but these figures give us a basis for significant comparison. A typical modern "reader" for seven-year olds in an American elementary school contains between 500 and 600 English words. "Basic English" consists of 850 words. A responsible estimate (1941) gives an American child of six an average "recognition" vocabulary of 16,900 basic words or 23,700 total (basic plus derivative) words. The youth of eighteen has a recognition vocabulary of 47,300 basic words or 80,300 total words. Another study (1945) based on children's writing shows that the composite active, i.e., written, vocabulary of American first-graders amounts to 5,099 words and that the corresponding figure for eighth-graders is 17,930 words.

A moment's reflection will make it clear that the limited vocabulary taught in a beginning foreign language course is, of pedagogical necessity, carefully chosen for its usefulness in connection with graded readers and in illustrating a variety of grammatical and idiomatic points about the new language. Usually it is *not* chosen with a view to tourist or business needs, as would be the vocabulary taught, say, in a commercial language course.

# Time

The President of the Berlitz School of Languages estimates that "a good working knowledge" of a spoken foreign language takes about 100 hours of *individual instruction*. The wartime Intensive Language Program, with its very small classes, involved 612 or more hours of concentrated instruction. On the other hand, a typical one-year beginning language course in college involves between 90 and 120 hours of instruction in classes of 20 or more students. One must consider the problems faced by the instructor of such a course.

2. *Knowledge and skills.* Properly directed, language learning is a richly varied experience; but when time is severely limited, the language teacher is compelled either (a) to attempt all the possible things and therefore do them superficially, or (b) to neglect some because of the desperate effort to do justice to others. Either decision leads to disappointment for many students. Let any reasonable person think for a moment about the problem in its simplest terms: How, in 90 hours of classroom time, to teach:

a) listening comprehension of a new tongue;

b) speaking ability involving the making of new sounds in unfamiliar structures;

c) reading ability involving the rapid acquisition of a "passive" vocabulary considerably in excess of that used in speaking;

d) writing ability;

e) knowledge of structural differences between the foreign tongue and one's own, explained through grammatical terminology that in many cases will be as foreign to the student as the new language;

f) knowledge of the foreign culture; and

g) comprehension of the subject matter of any texts used.

What emerges from the usual one-year college or two-year high school attempt to achieve all these basic, widely acknowledged objectives? We get a student who can read, say, a little very simple French, or talk Spanish within a very limited conversational range. Make no mistake about it, he has no "mastery" of a second language, and both the vocational and cultural advantages of genuine proficiency are still beyond his reach. He has merely had what in many other nations would be the beginning of seven or nine years of uninterrupted instruction, leading to eventual proficiency.

We believe that, while even limited instruction in a foreign language has educational value as a "Copernican step," it does not produce results commensurate with national needs on the one hand or the normal and natural expectations of parents and students on the other hand. Accepting blame, as a profession, for some beclouding of this issue in the past, we urge that educational administrators, wherever and whenever possible, institute in our schools and colleges sequences of language instruction that will guarantee to those students with aptitude and interest the mastery they want and need to achieve.

# *Audio-Visual Aids*

PROFESSIONAL alertness demands that language teachers consider unremittingly how technological advances in their field may help them improve their individual proficiency. New types of equipment, which at first disturb our customary procedures and serve us awkwardly in the early stages, have a way of becoming indispensable later. As more people learn to master the new machines, they add to their total teaching effectiveness.

It is a matter of national urgency as well as of professional pride that teachers of foreign languages, along with their colleagues in other fields, seek all possible means of improving their efficiency, individually and collectively. The possibility that audial and visual aids to language teaching—especially, instruction by radio and television and use of language laboratories—can enable the highly skilled language teacher, with the help of assistants, to teach a greater number of students without loss of effectiveness, deserves investigation.

The general satisfaction experienced by the more than 100 colleges and universities which have already installed and experimented with language laboratories leads us to conclude that the language laboratory has already been accepted by many as a highly desirable aid to language teaching.

We therefore recommend:

1) that language instructors through experimentation familiarize themselves with and develop the possibilities of using audio-visual equipment;

2) that objective evaluation techniques be developed and applied;

3) that state, regional, and national organizations of language teachers make increased efforts to study these experiments and to communicate their findings to the widest possible audiences;

4) that adequate training in the use of A-V techniques be included hereafter in the preparation of FL teachers;

5) that language instructors in individual institutions seek administrative support for language laboratory equipment, including visual aids, as an already widely accepted adjunct to teaching.

# FLs in the Elementary Schools

AFTER MORE than three years of studying a variety of reports on the teaching of foreign languages in the public elementary schools, we express our approval of this popular movement in American education.

In our judgment the movement deserves the support of parents and educational administrators because:

1) it recognizes the evidence concerning the process of language learning, introducing study of a second language to children at an age when they are naturally curious about language, when they have fewest inhibitions, and when they imitate most easily new sounds and sound patterns;

2) it recognizes the fact that the greatest natural barriers to international understanding are the unreasoning reactions to "foreign-ness" which are often acquired in childhood but which may be offset by experiences with foreign speech and behavior; and

3) it recognizes the fact that real proficiency in the use of a foreign language requires progressive learning over an extended period.

It is our further judgment that the public should be warned against faddish aspects of this movement. No new venture in American education can long prosper without the wholehearted support of parents, teachers, and educational administrators in a given community. Proponents of foreign language study in the elementary schools should not, therefore, initiate programs until

1) a majority of the parents concerned approve at least an experimental program, and

2) local school boards and administrators are convinced that necessary preparations have been made.

Necessary preparations include:

1) recruitment of an adequate number of interested teachers who have both skill in guiding children and the necessary language qualifications,

2) availability of material appropriate to each age level, with new approaches and a carefully planned syllabus for each grade, and

3) adequate provisions for appraisal.

The success of existing programs thus initiated, prepared for, and appraised convinces us of the urgent need of providing, for children who have the ability and desire, the opportunity for continuous progress in language study into and through junior and senior high school.

# *The Unusual Languages*

ALTHOUGH it is a commonplace that the United States now occupies a position of world leadership, it is still not sufficiently recognized that in order to meet, on a basis of mutual understanding and cooperation, not only the diplomats and military men but also the common people of the other nations of the globe, the United States does not yet have nearly enough persons adequately trained in the languages of those nations. We urge, therefore, that constructive measures be taken as rapidly as possible to encourage in our colleges and universities the study of the more significant world languages; for example, those of the people of India, of the Near East, of Japan and China, of Indonesia, of Central Africa. Even the study of Russian has been and is seriously deficient, compared with our national need in view of the present struggle of ideologies.

Language study in our schools is still limited too exclusively to the Western European countries. Adequately trained teachers and instructional materials for other languages are scarce or non-existent. The Committee on the Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies, therefore, with the aid of Ford Foundation grants is now developing a body of trained linguists, a corpus of descriptive analyses of many of the less known languages, and materials for instruction in the form of manuals, recordings, and dictionaries. This tooling process is slow, but it is indispensable and merits wider recognition and encouragement.

In order to develop effective instruction, we urge the establishment of *centers of instruction* in colleges and universities in various parts of the country, each one specializing in a single group of languages spoken by millions of people but practically unknown to us. It would be desirable also to make available in each center instruction in the geography, history, economics, and politics of the language area studied. It is essential and urgent *educational planning*, regional and national, that we call for; we believe it is possible and desirable to develop such centers throughout the United States. Without such progress in language competence, the United States can hardly measure up to its present world responsibilities.

# The FL Program and the Classical Languages

THE STEERING COMMITTEE for the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association of America believes that the obvious relevance of modern language study to modern life should not blind educators or the American public to the importance of our having more citizens who know *ancient* languages. It is not only that our Western civilization is more intelligible to those who can directly read its origins and development in our heritage from Greece and Rome; there is also the urgently *modern* fact that our children and grandchildren are going to have to understand this Western heritage in relation to the cultural traditions of the East.

Accumulating evidence shows that a first foreign language can most readily be learned in childhood and learned primarily as spoken language. Unless Latin is taught in this way, we believe that study of an ancient language is best postponed until secondary school age, and that an ancient language can be learned most efficiently if a modern foreign language has first been approached as speech. Hence we recommend that the study of Latin as a second foreign language be vigorously promoted in our secondary schools, and we further recommend that administrators, counsellors, and teachers of modern languages in our colleges and universities take practical steps to encourage more students to learn ancient Greek, Hebrew, classical Arabic, Chinese, and Sanskrit.

Latin is the parent language of French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. It has also, with Greek, furnished nearly the whole of our English intellectual vocabulary. Its literature is the key to many basic concepts that we have modified to create what we tend to think of as our uniquely modern political, esthetic, and intellectual life. Ignorance of this cultural heritage is a dubious preparation for cultural advance. Ignorance of one's linguistic heritage is, moreover, a dubious basis for informed and effective use of either English or a modern Romance language. We view the decline of Latin in American education as an unfortunate result of radical and shortsighted efforts to "modernize" the curriculum and make education "practical."

The curriculum of the future, if it is designed to meet problems of the future, will recognize that the classical languages—Eastern as well as Western—have a claim to the attention of educated men and women who would, through language study, know the significant past at first hand. This is an essential contribution of the Humanities, which the modern languages—whose own past is steadily lengthening—share in, but cannot monopolize.

# College FL Degree Requirements

WE BELIEVE, as do the faculties of 706 liberal arts colleges in the United States, that some experience with and some degree of skill in using a foreign language are a truly *indispensable* element in liberal education. We further believe that our country's foreseeable international responsibilities make it imperative for more Americans to acquire a more functional knowledge of modern foreign languages. In a world in which the skill is in growing demand, ability to use a modern foreign language more than justifies its continued prominence in curricula offering many other rewarding educational experiences, for the cultural benefits of language study are as great as ever. We therefore affirm:

1) that no curriculum leading to the B.A. degree is educationally defensible unless it requires of all students reasonable proficiency in the use of *at least one* foreign language, and

2) that by "reasonable proficiency" we mean, in the case of modern foreign languages, certain abilities, no matter how or when acquired: (a) the ability to get the sense of what an educated native says when he is speaking simply on a general subject, (b) the ability to use the common expressions needed for getting around in the foreign country, speaking with a pronunciation readily understandable to a native, (c) the ability to grasp directly the meaning of simple, non-technical writing, except for an occasional word, and (d) the ability to write a short, simple letter. We spell out these skills because we believe that the increasingly important educational justification of a language requirement is not served by statement of the requirement solely in terms of courses or credit hours.

Pledging ourselves to strive for continued improvement of language teaching in our colleges, we urge the colleges to make certain that their language requirement, as affecting the modern languages, is rewarding to the student and meaningful for the nation. Finally, we urge any institutions which have hitherto either decreased or abandoned their foreign language degree requirement to reconsider their educational programs in the light of changed conditions and critical needs.